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June 24, 2002

To: Lee L. Huntsman
Provost

From: Marsha L. Landolt 
Dean and Vice Provost

Re: Department of Landscape Architecture 10-year review

Summary and recommendation

The Graduate School Council met with the internal members of the Department of Landscape Architecture review committee, the Dean of the College of Architecture and Urban Planning, and Departmental representatives at its meeting of May 22, 2002. The review team and the Graduate School Council were highly complimentary of the Department. The Council recommended continuation of the Bachelor and Master of Landscape Architecture programs, with the next review scheduled for 2011/2012. I concur with the assessment and the recommendation.

Background

The Department of Landscape Architecture was established in 1969. It offers two professionally accredited programs, the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (BLA) and the Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA). Both programs attract substantial student interest: the Department receives an average of 100 applications annually for its 12-15 MLA places and 35-40 applicants annually for its 15-18 BLA places. The number of tenure-line faculty has recently increased from 6 to 8 and the Department has also significantly increased the number of adjunct faculty (currently at 11) in order to develop closer ties with other academic and professional units. These additions have allowed for an expanded scope in the curriculum: for instance, the Department hired an environmental psychologist in 2001. Recent years have seen an increase in faculty publications; in addition, two senior faculty (Schauman and Haag) have received the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture's Outstanding Educator Award, which is the highest national award for landscape architecture educators.

The review team recognized the important strategic strides the Department has made in recent years. The team was particularly impressed by the Department's choice of "Urban Ecological Design" as its intellectual focus: the external reviewers emphasized this as a particularly innovative approach that fits well into the Department's urban and regional context. With UW Tools for Transformation funding, the Department has developed enhanced studio instruction that integrates teaching, advising and research in a context that closely mimics the work of practicing professionals. This, combined with chair Iain Robertson's inclusive administrative style, has led to a rigorous and collegial culture among faculty and students alike. This high morale bodes well for the Department's future.

The review team did identify a number of areas to which the Department should devote attention. Several of these areas have already been identified in the Department's strategic plan and are being addressed. Chief among these are the complaints of MLA students that the final thesis requirement detracts from studio time. The Department is currently developing a design-oriented thesis option for the MLA. The Department is also developing new guidelines for promotion and tenure, although the review team was concerned that they be completed more quickly given the Department's high percentage of young faculty and relative lack of senior faculty. The review team encouraged the Department to become more active in fund raising, while respecting the potential competition for funds with the Center for Urban Horticulture. Outside funding was seen as vital for the support of graduate students, recruiting minority students (a notable weakness in the program), and developing the computing technology which is becoming vital in the field.

Finally, the review team recognized the Department's strong history of incorporating Native American tribes into its programs. Important ties have been forged with local tribes by a single individual, Roxanne Hamilton. These ties may well be lost if her funding is not continued. However this situation appears to reflect a deliberate choice by the Department, as she was not given an appointment when funding was available. The review committee encouraged the Department to continue its multicultural efforts, but questioned whether they were sufficiently broad based.

The Council recognized the Department of Landscape Architecture's potential to be "really great." Members were impressed with the Department's productivity given its small size and limited funding.

c: Richard L. McCormick, President
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